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1st Prize
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TO MEET THE CHINOOKS

by

Alan A. Fraser

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STORY: This is the story of an Englishman, Lord Charles Satteringham, and his lady, Hester. After suffering the loss of his fortune, he comes to the cowtown of Calgary, situated in the wild and woolly foothills of Western Canada. He is in search of his younger son, the Honorable Gerald Fellowes, one of the blackest of blacksheep, whom he has paid to stay as far as possible from the "ancestral nest." The Honorable Gerald has been impressing his family with tales of his success as a 'gopher' rancher, so naturally they are surprised to discover that their younger son is quite unknown in the little prairie community. They introduce themselves to an itinerant preacher, Dan Brown, as they sit together in the lobby of the Alberta Hotel; are scandalized by the behaviour of the hotel man-of-all works, Sam; and finally meet the widow Blaine, a comely young rancher, who has come to town to arrange her marriage with a no-good, remittance man, who has fled his native England. The old couple are quite overcome when they finally discover the bridegroom-to-be is none other than their long-sought after son and decide to return to their home. They are heart-broken with wounded pride when they discover he is marrying Dolly Blaine because of her wealth and that his stories of wealth and affluence were mere "spoofing." However, it is very hard to keep up appearances on an empty purse and Dolly is very persuasive in making everybody behave as she wants them to, so everything ends happily.

SCENE: The Lobby of the Alberta Hotel, Calgary, N. W. T. It is late afternoon in December, 1895.

The hotel lobby is typical of the period, a little shabby in comparison with the grand hotels of the republic to the south, but the Calgarians view its interior with pride. Upstage right is the hotel counter which runs across the back of the room and curves in to meet the stairs about two-thirds of the way across. Behind it is the office desk, the customary pigeon-hole racks etc. The wide stairs go up to the second floor. The door leading to the street is just downstage from the counter and down from the door is a large plate-glass window with its view of Stephen Avenue. Double doors, in the centre of the left wall, give entrance to the bar. Downstage left is a small table with stacks of newspapers and magazines on it and, to the right of the table, is a large, leather-covered easy chair. Opposite it, with its back to the window, is another similarly-upholstered chair. A matching sofa is beside it, so arranged that it is directly facing the fireplace, which glows softly from the footlights. In the upper left corner is a large hat-rack.

CHARACTERS:

SAM	- the man of all works at the Alberta Hotel
DAN BROWN	- an itinerant preacher
CHARLES, LORD SATTERINGHAM	- an English nobleman
HESTER	- his noble lady
DOLLY BLAINE	- the comely young widow of a wealthy rancher
BILLY GRAY	- a no-account cowpuncher
THE HONORABLE GERALD FELLOWES	the blacksheep of the Satteringham family

As the curtain goes up, a middle-aged, nondescript character called Sam is laboriously trying to add up a column of figures, as he sits behind the counter. He chews away at the stub of a pencil as the Sky Pilot, Dan Brown, enters right from the street. He is dressed in winter clothes, a buffalo coat, fur cap, overshoes, etc. Blowing on his fingers, he stuffs his fur mitts in his pocket and stamps the snow from his feet.

BROWN: Hello, Sam!

SAM: (Looking up) Well, if it ain't the Sky Pilot! (He reaches across the counter and they shake hands)

BROWN: (Crossing to the hatrack) How's things going in Calgary? Everybody treating you right?

SAM: Oh, sure.

BROWN: (Removing his outer garments and hanging them up) Nice to get in where it's warm. Pretty cold out today.

SAM: Thirty below last time I looked.

BROWN: That's too cold for man nor beast. This country's never going to develop, Sam.

SAM: Tell that to them real estate birds. I' ain't interested.

BROWN: (Coming down to the table) They wouldn't believe me. Right now they're selling city lots a hundred miles to the north of town.

SAM: No! That's what they call 'vision.'

BROWN: Maybe, but I call it highway robbery.

SAM: Say, whatcha doing in town? Thought you was holed up in the Red Deer country.

BROWN: Sure, I was. Well now, it might be getting pretty close to Christmas.

SAM: If you want to stop that shivering, go over by the fire and warm yourself. That ain't a reason?

BROWN: Well, no. Got a marrying job on my hands. (He sits on the sofa)

SAM: You don't say.

BROWN: Yes sir, right here in Calgary.

SAM: Well, I'll be ---! Who's the female?

BROWN: Dolly Blaine.

SAM: Well, I'll be ---! Say, it ain't so long since she buried her first.

BROWN: That reminds me. I've been wanting to hear the rights of that story. I was up north when that happened to Joe.

SAM: (Emerging from behind the counter and coming to the back of the sofa) You mean to say you didn't hear?

BROWN: Nothing I could make sense of.

SAM: Why, I'd thought that news woulda stampeded clean to Edmonton. Poor old Joe! Tried to ride a wild cayuse with his belly full of licker. 'Twas last July as I remembers. That wall-eyed bronk sure minced him up some. Bill Bowles, him what combines the duties of town clerk, town printer and town undertaker, he scraped up what he could and they buried 'the remains' as Bill puts it in the paper.

BROWN: And what about Dolly?

SAM: Oh her. She whooped and hollered worse'n a gol-durned coyote. You could hear her grieving from here to Shagannappi.

BROWN: Tch! Tch! The evils of drink.

SAM: There's some as thinks Dolly gave that nag a little snort of Red Eye.

BROWN: Come, come, Sam. We mustn't gossip.

SAM: (Heading back behind the counter) Course not. (He changes his mind and steers a course around to the end of the sofa) My, my! The Ladies' Aid will be glad to get your news, Parson. My old woman tells me they'd figgered out Dolly wouldn't be long aseeking a little masculine comfort.

BROWN: Well now, it isn't natural for the young to mourn long, Sam. Not in this country where women are scarce.

SAM: (Perching on the arm of the sofa and pointing his finger at Brown) And don't you be forgetting all Joe Blaine's holdings. Added Attraction, as you might say.

BROWN: Joe leave her pretty well fixed?

SAM: Can't see Elbow Valley fer them shorthorns of Dolly's.

BROWN: Do tell.

SAM: Well, I'd better git back to my figgering. (Goes towards the counter)

BROWN: Sam, do you think it will chihook for Christmas?

SAM: What do you think I am, huh? A Medicine Man? Say, that reminds me. How would you explain a chinook to a tenderfoot? It's got me beat.

BROWN: Oh, it's a warm, dry wind that blows down from the mountains, all the rain having fallen out of it while it was climbing up on the west side of the good old Rockies. Something like that.

SAM: That just Injun talk and don't mean a thing to these dad-burned strangers. Hey, who's the young buck marrying Dolly?

BROWN: Can't remember the name, Sam. He's an Englishman.

SAM: No! (Clutching at the counter for support) Not one of them there remittance men?

BROWN: Guess so. He's got a parcel of land out there near the Blaine ranch. (Goes towards table, left) Far as I can tell all this fellow's done so far is dig himself a hole, board it up a bit, cover it with sod - and live in it. (He looks at the papers)

SAM: Lazy huh? And he's going to marry Dolly Blaine. Well, I'll be ---! Sorry, Pars. Got to git to work. (He goes behind the counter)

(A few moments silence while Sam works and Brown, selecting a paper, sits down in the chair before the table and reads it)

BROWN: (Not looking up) Lots of strangers in town.

SAM: You ain't telling me something I don't know.

BROWN: Queer ones, too.

SAM: They stay here - all of them.

BROWN: I wasn't on the avenue two minutes before some pudgy little man rushes up to me and says, 'I say, do you know my son, the Honorable such and such?' Didn't catch the name.

SAM: Yep, he's corralled here too, him and his old woman. Can't savvy them myself. Furriners, I guess.

BROWN: You're wrong, Sam. He isn't a foreignor. He's an Englishman.

SAM: What's the difference?

(The voice of Charles, Lord Satteringham, drifts down the stairs. Charles is not an individual, he is the representative of a class. Hester, his wife, is his female counterpart)

CHARLES: But, my dear Hester, I must admit to complete bafflement. I can't understand it. (His accent is English - definitely!)

SAM: Here they come, Pars. (Brown is buried behind his newspaper while Sam chews vigorously at his pencil)

(The middle-aged couple come slowly down the stairs)

HESTER: (A tall, thin, middle-aged lady) Now Charles, we must not give way to despair.

CHARLES: My dear, when you try to uplift me, you merely annoy me. (They stop midway between Brown's chair and the sofa) (To Brown) Would you mind if we sat?

BROWN: (Looking up) Why, of Course not! (His voice oozing Western hospitality) Sit down! Sit down!

CHARLES: I beg your pardon!

BROWN: (A bit cooled) I said I don't mind if you do.

CHARLES: Thank you. Be seated, Hester!

(They sit primly, together on the edge of the sofa)

BROWN: (After a moment, trying to break the ice) Coldish.

CHARLES: (To Brown) Did you speak?

BROWN: I said it was cold out.

CHARLES: (With finality) Naturally.

(A silence)

BROWN: (With a chip on his shoulder) I hope you're enjoying your visit.

CHARLES: (His eyes moving slightly to the left) Eh?

BROWN: I said is this your first trip to the West?

CHARLES: Does one make more than one?

(The silence is resumed to be broken by the strident voice of the Hotelkeeper's wife, calling from the floor above)

THE VOICE: SAM! YOU, SAM, DOWN THERE!

SAM: (Visibly agitated, yells) Yeah?

THE VOICE: What in tarnation you doing?

SAM: Just trying to add up the books, Miz Halterthorn.

THE VOICE: The idea! You rustle that old moose-hide of yourn right up them stairs and clean out this hall. D'you hear me?

SAM: (Quietly) Aw heck! (Yells) There ain't nobody at the desk.

THE VOICE: You hear me, you gol-durned coyote!

(Sam, muttering to himself, rushes up the stairs and disappears)

HESTER: (Who had been taking it all in, is appalled) How terribly vulgar!

BROWN: (Speaking up) It's just the West, Ma'am.

HESTER: I beg your pardon!

BROWN: Just local exuberance, Ma'am.

(Hester sniffs and Charles glares at both of them. Brown rises to go)

CHARLES: (Looking up) As I was about to say.

BROWN: Yes?

CHARLES: By chance, er - ah (In a rush) do you know my son?

BROWN: I doubt it. (He goes rapidly up the stairs and disappears)

CHARLES: (Rises, and watches him go, then turns to his wife) How odd!

HESTER: Oh Charles, I'm weary of it all.

CHARLES: Eh?

HESTER: (Rises - she speaks with great feeling) Oh, this cold, dreary country, it's brutal! and these people, all of them - so uncouth and rude. Everything, empty and barren. (She moves to the back of the chairdownstage right, then turns to Charles) I know Gerald has been spoofing us.

CHARLES: (Picking up Brown's newspaper, which had been dropped by the chair) Spoofing us? I say, Hester, the Times! (He looks at it, then - in a dead voice) Six months old!

HESTER: (Scornfully) All his stories of wealth and affuence! They can't be true. He has deceived us, Charles.

CHARLES: (Going to the table and hopefully rummaging through the papers) Nonsense!. Why are you forever judging from outward appearance. I can't understand you. (Looking at her)

CHARLES: Gerald would never spoof. It is beneath the dignity of a Fellowes (Looking back to the papers) and Gerald, for all his waywardness, is a Fellowes.

HESTER: (Abashed, seats herself in the chair) Perhaps you are right.

CHARLES: Am I ever wrong? Am I?

HESTER: No, Charles.

CHARLES: Then why all this quibbling. (He paces the floor) Dash it all, Hester, I can't understnd it.

HESTER: What, Charles?

CHARLES: Why a man of Gerald's standing is such a stranger in his own community.

HESTER: It is a mystery -- and so disheartening.

CHARLES: (Annoyed) Not at all!

HESTER: Have you an answer?

CHARLES: Naturally. Men of Gerald's social position are the rule in this country, not the exception.

HESTER: (Dubiously) Oh, quite, - but I shall be jolly glad to return to England. (She turns her back on him, and takes out her knitting from the bag she has been carrying)

(Charles is about to explode when he hears Brown and Sam descending the stairs behind him)

SAM: That old woman, she's a ---- well, never mind, Pars, you wouldn't understand. (He goes behind the counter)

BROWN: (Going to the hatrack) Never mind, Sam. We all have our cross to bear. Guess I'll run over and give a little spiritual comfort to old Mrs. MacDonald. Her rheumatism is bothering her again, she says.

CHARLES: (Centrestage) Surely one of you gentlemen know my son?

BROWN: (Coming over to Charles) What did you say his name was?

CHARLES: The Honorable Gerald Fellowes.

SAM: (Coming from behind the counter) What's he do?

CHARLES: The Honorable Gerald Fellowes? Why, he ranches, of course. Successfully too, by Jove.

SAM: Not around this cowtown. Where's his stamping grounds?

CHARLES: Eh?

BROWN: What is his post office address?

CHARLES: Calgary - naturally.

SAM: Funny! Never heard of him. Know most of the local boys real personal-like too. What did you say his moniker was? Bellowes? Now Hermy Bellowes runs cattle up in the Sheep Creek country but he's a Yankee. Sure don't talk like you folks, does Hermy. Do you know him Parson?

CHARLES: (Roaring) Fellowes!

BROWN: 'Fraid I don't know anyone by that name.

SAM: Me neither. Well, got to git to work. (He goes out left)

(Brown turns to go, but Charles speaks to him)

CHARLES: I say, are you a clergyman?

BROWN: You could call me that. Most folks in these parts say Parson Brown and some just know me as the Sky Pilot.

CHARLES: You don't tell me. Ordained?

BROWN: Well, not rightly, but in this new country nobody has time to find that out. They're just happy if I give them a little spiritual comfort now and then.

CHARLES: (To his wife) Hester, my dear. Mr. Brown is a clergyman.

HESTER: Oh Charles. (She collects her knitting and stands) How do you do, Mr. Brown (They shake hands) Won't you sit down? (They sit together on the sofa, Brown on the left)

CHARLES: (Standing to the left of them) Pretty extensive parish, I dare say?

BROWN: Yes, I do travel quite a little.

HESTER: Then you must have met our son, dear Gerald.

BROWN: Now maybe I have. Meet so many people it's kind of hard to remember all their names. Tell me a bit about him.

HESTER: My son is very handsome, Mr. Brown.

CHARLES: (Seating himself in the chair, left) A trifle wild as a lad, but we have reason to believe he's managed to steady himself and settle down like a proper gentleman. We all do, you know.

BROWN: That seems to be the way of the world.

HESTER: He has written us such charming letters. I wish you could see them.

CHARLES: Indeed, quite astounded me with descriptions of his vast estate in the Foothills Paradise, as he puts it.

HESTER: We couldn't fail to notice an undercurrent of, shall I say, prosperity in them lately.

CHARLES: Oh quite! Spoke of his gophers. How did he express it?

HESTER: (Quoting) Could you but feast your eyes upon my gophers, Mater dear. I boast the largest herd in Canada.

BROWN: (A Trifle aghast) Gophers!

HESTER: That's just it. We were puzzled too, weren't we, Charles?

CHARLES: Come now, Hester. Perhaps you were puzzled, but any silly ass knows the word 'gopher' is a colloquialism for Prairie Dog. Am I not right, sir?

BROWN: Well ---

CHARLES: Of course! Raise them for buffalo hunting Gerald informs me.

HESTER: Dear Charles. Frightfully clever of you!.

CHARLES: A gentleman on the train told me the buffalo are disappearing from the plains?

BROWN: They are practically gone.

CHARLES: Dear me! Must advise Gerald to sell the little beggars before the market for them drops.

(Sam appears from the left with a mop and a bucket of water)

SAM: Sorry folks, but that old --, lady said I had to mop up around here. Now don't get excited---I'll just skirt around you like. (He starts mopping)

BROWN: (Moving to the chair downstage right) I find your story rather intriguing. Please tell me more.

HESTER: Now let me think. Oh yes, he spoke of his Coolies.

BROWN: Did you say Coulees?

CHARLES: Why yes, isn't that what you call them?

BROWN: Oh you mean ravines -- or ah - gullies.

CHARLES: (Emphatically) Coolies! What we in England would term a class of servant. My brother in China has a fund of stories concerning his Chinese Coolies. Definitely a cheap form of labor, don't you think?

BROWN: Oh sure. I'll agree with you on the Chinese Coolies but when it comes to our Canadian variety -- well, I'd hate to commit myself. How did your son describe them?

HESTER: (Again the quote) ' Can you believe it, the Coolies on my ranch are so numerous I've never had time to count them all.' Of course the spelling was not exactly right --

CHARLES: But then, Gerald was never a good speller. (Annoyed at Sam who is lazily slapping his mop about the feet of Lord Charles) Take care!

SAM: Don't mind me. Carry right on as if you can't see me.

BROWN: Is your son something of a wit, ma'am?

CHARLES: (Holding his feet aloft in a dignified manner) Definitely. Inherits it from my family. Strong sense of humor and all that.

SAM: All righty ---you can lower the cowhides, Shorty.

(Charles is ready to explode and Hester speaks quickly)

HESTER: By any chance, are you acquainted with the Chinooks?

BROWN: (Carefully) Chinooks? Just how do you mean?

CHARLES: Surely you've met the Chinooks. Really quite top-hole people, I believe.

HESTER: Gentry, I'm sure.

BROWN: (Laughing awkwardly) Oh you mean the Chinooks.

HESTER: (With an eye on the approaching Sam) Remarkable, aren't they? Gerald wrote so feelingly concerning them. 'Things do get one down in this country,' he wrote, ' and when I'm feeling particularly low and practically frozen to death, the Chinooks blow down from the mountains and give me quite a house-warming.' Such a quaint way of putting it, don't you think? (She gathers her skirts about her and raises them above the swishing mop)

BROWN: Oh, I see.

SAM: Boy, what we couldn't do with a good Chinook right now, eh Pars? Make a lot of folks in this town right happy. 'Scuse me, ma'am.

CHARLES: So you do know the Chinooks?

SAM: Ain't nobody in these here parts better known, eh Pars? (He winks at Brown as he starts to mop around Brown's feet)

CHARLES: There you are, Hester. At last, we're beginning to find a clue.

HESTER: Oh, it makes me happy to know that Gerald has found one of his own type.

CHARLES: Egad! Blood will tell.

BROWN: Perhaps I'd better explain ---

SAM: (Slapping his mop around Brown's legs) They're a breezy lot, I might say. Yes sir, a breezy lot, but warm, mind you.

HESTER: Oh Charles, if we could only meet one of this family. (To Sam) Tell me, my good man, would they be staying in town by any chance, or are they making merry in their castle on the crest of the Rockies?

SAM: (Leaning on his mop) Well, can't rightly say, ma'am --- unpredictable lot, eh Pars? (He winks at Brown)

HESTER: But nice?

SAM: You can bet your shirt on that.

HESTER: Not like those horrid Brandings.

BROWN: You said?

HESTER: Brandings? Am I not right, Charles?

CHARLES: Quite right, my dear. The same name as that bally poacher back in dear old England. Branding! Extraordinary coincidence!

HESTER: Gerald said something to the effect the Brandings were in frightfully bad odor last spring.

SAM: Say -- did your son tell you about Mr. Leaping Grasshopper?

CHARLES: Hyphenated?

SAM: Come again.

BROWN: Hitch name, Sam.

SAM: Oh, sure, sure!

HESTER: I don't recall a Grasshopper.

CHARLES: Definitely not. Beastly little insect.

SAM: Honest, you've got me wrong. Thought sure your boy would mention the old geezer. Why, he's got the biggest set-up in these parts. Folks call it The Reservation.

BROWN: Sam, you take your pail and mop and get out of here right now. There might be a customer coming.

SAM: Doubt it. Train's stalled at Medicine Hat. (But he disappears out left)

(Before he is through the doorway, the street door opens. Sam turns, sets down his pail and mop to step forward and greet Dolly Blaine. She is a lively, petite blonde, between 25 and 30, dressed in conventional costume of the period. She is not a cowgirl when she comes to town.)

DOLLY: Hello, Sam.

(Her greeting is short, for she is irritated, irritated at the person who follows her in. It is Billy Gray, very much the cowboy from his jingling spurs to the tall crown of his Stetson)

DOLLY: If you don't quit following me around, Billy Gray, I'll drill you so full of lead they'll be using you for a hitching post.

BILLY: And if you hitch yourself up to that gol-durned tenderfoot, I'll deserve it. Him and his fancy lingo. No, Daisy, I'm agoing to save you from a fate worse than death.

DOLLY: Shut up, you bandy-legged, tongue-tied cowpuncher. (She turns her back on him and addresses Sam) Well Sam, you mangy old Billy-goat, I see you're still walled up in this hoss stable. Got a room for me.

SAM: If my eyes ain't deceiving me, it's the widder Blaine.

DOLLY: They ain't.

SAM: Dolly, you're as welcome as a spring crocus and twice as purty. Go right up to the same old stall. It's empty.

DOLLY: Thanks, Sam. You'd better hog-tie William to the bar or he'll be following me upstairs.

SAM: Over my dead body!

BILLY: Reach for your gun, Gin bucket!

SAM: (Grabbing Billy's gun before he can free it from the holster) March! March, durn your hide!

(He marches Billy across the stage and out left. As he passes his pail and mop, he collects them too and follows the cowboy out)

DOLLY: (Calling to Sam as she goes upstairs) Thanks, pard. That coyote's been trailing me ever since I hit town. (She disappears)

HESTER: (Rises) I feel slightly ill.

CHARLES: (Goes to her) My dear Hester, buck up. (To Brown) My wife is much too delicate to rough it. Such scenes as that we have just witnessed would not be tolerated in England.

BROWN: Oh, you mustn't mind that. People live a little closer to nature out here on the frontier. That's all.

HESTER: (Going towards the stairs) You shouldn't have brought me, Charles. Really, you shouldn't have.

CHARLES: Don't be tiresome, Hester. It's just that we've chosen a rather low class hotel.

SAM: (Sticking his head around the corner of the doorway, left) You don't say! (He appears, mop over shoulder) That's what you think now, Shorty, but wait 'til you see the dives. (He disappears out left)

HESTER: (Dazed) It's most distressing. Servants do not behave so brazenly back home.

BROWN: Class doesn't mean very much, ma'am. Out here, it is what's underneath that counts.

CHARLES: I wonder. Why only this morning as I strolled down the street, I observed several notices in the windows of the shops. Help wanted, no Englishman need apply. Fancy tolerating that sort of thing. And in a British colony.

BROWN: I imagine that would annoy you a little. But as I was saying, it's what's underneath that counts.

CHARLES: (Belligerently) I have no sympathy with this so-called equality, my dear sir.

BROWN: I can see that.

CHARLES: (Facing Brown) Are you inferring that I am not a gentleman?

HESTER: (Upstage) Charles, your nerves!

CHARLES: I am an Englishman!

BROWN: (Rising to his feet) And a stranger in these parts. If you want to get along with the natives let me give you a tip. People out west are too busy fighting nature to care who your father might be. They're spending too much time just trying to keep alive and warm to worry about your social standing. We don't wear a colored tie to separate the strong from the weak - life does that for us. To keep the sun from scorching our necks we just wrap a bandana round. That's our old school tie and the gaudier it is the better we like it. My advice to you is just this - leave your patronizing at home when you make a trip to the wild and woolly west.

CHARLES: I say.

DOLLY: (Who has come down the stairs in time to hear the Parson's last few lines) Put her there, Mr. Brown. (She shakes his hand) That's the best sermon I've heard you preach.

BROWN: I haven't noticed you listening to many of them, Dolly.

DOLLY: That's acing my king. Who's your friends?

BROWN: Folks, I'd like you to meet Dolly Blaine -- the smartest little female rustler in these parts.

(The English couple look down from a great height. Dolly goes upstage to shake the limp, unwilling hand of Lady Hester)

DOLLY: Please to meetcha! Any friend of the Sky Pilot's a friend of mine. Say, what's wrong with you?

HESTER: I beg your pardon?

DOLLY: You've got a stiff neck. Now that's too bad. Let me see. I know.

HESTER: Please don't trouble.

DOLLY: Liniment's the very thing. I've got some right upstairs in my bag. Use it on my horses.

HESTER: Please!

DOLLY: It's a mite strong, but it will sure do the trick. (She goes towards the stairs)

CHARLES: (Commandingly) Woman! There is nothing wrong with my wife.

DOLLY: (Returning) Now I'm glad to hear that. I guess she was just born with that wry neck of hers. Well, let's all sit down and get acquainted. You've no idea how lonely I get for people, way out there on my ranch.

BROWN: (Sitting on chair downstage right) Mrs. Blaine's in town for her wedding.

HESTER: (Coldly) How nice!

CHARLES: (Sitting down on chair right) Rather!

DOLLY: Oh, he's just the most adorable man, Parson. Tall and dark and handsome. (To Hester) Now come and sit down, do. (She steers Hester on to the sofa) And he's English, too. Just like you folks.

CHARLES: I say!

DOLLY: (Holding the centre of attention) Oh sure! Gerry is so lovable I've just got to pinch myself to realize what a lucky girl I am.

HESTER: (To Brown) Did you say "Mrs." Blaine?

BROWN: Her first was killed by a bronc. Dolly's a widow.

HESTER: How terribly, terribly sad.

DOLLY: Oh, you wouldn't say that if you'd known Joe Blaine, would she, Mr. Brown? Terribly, terribly lucky!

CHARLES: I say!

DOLLY: (Going over to him) What's your name?

CHARLES: (Rising) Eh?

DOLLY: Please tell me your name. I hate talking to people that are just faces, don't you?

CHARLES: May I present my wife, Mrs. Blaine. Hester, Lady Sattering-ham.

HESTER: (With a wintry smile) Charmed!

DOLLY: How d' you do!

BROWN: And yonder is her lord.

DOLLY: Well, fry my hide, are you a really, honest-to-gosh lord?

CHARLES: I have that honor.

DOLLY: Ooooh. Is this my lucky day? Just wait 'til I tell Gerry. He'll have kittens!

HESTER: (Alarmed) I beg your pardon.

BROWN: He'll be astonished.

HESTER: Thank you.

DOLLY: (Pushing Charles into his chair) Sit down! There! (She sits on the arm of the chair) Are you broke too?

CHARLES: What?

DOLLY: Well, you know what I mean. Are you a blacksheep?

CHARLES: I beg your pardon.

DOLLY: Oh dear, can't you understand English? I mean, is someone paying you to keep out of England?

HESTER: Really!

CHARLES: My dear girl!

DOLLY: Gerry's all that, and more too, I guess. You see, that's the only kind of English we get out here. The other kind don't come this far west.

HESTER: Are you spoofing?

DOLLY: Spoofing?

BROWN: Pulling your leg?

CHARLES: I say!

DOLLY: (Laughing) Spoofing. Isn't that a funny word? I must use it on my fancy. Won't he be surprised?

CHARLES: Your what?

HESTER: Fiance, Charles.

CHARLES: Oh, I say. Perhaps I know him.

DOLLY: I don't think so. There are so many of his kind around.

HESTER: My son rawnches.

DOLLY: Isn't that wonderful! I don't know him though. Parson, have you ever heard of a Satteringham?

BROWN: Can't say that I have.

CHARLES: Let me explain --

DOLLY: I suppose you've come out to prop up the tottering homestead with a little pay dirt.

CHARLES: Eh?

DOLLY: Or are you going to shake a little out of him?

HESTER: My son is frightfully clever.

DOLLY: Well now, that is a surprise. Aren't you lucky! Gerry is anything but. However, he's honest and I like honesty in a man. Don't you, Lord Satteringham?

CHARLES: Oh quite!

DOLLY: (Jumping to her feet and moving restlessly about) Gerry told me quite frankly that he was marrying me for my money, I suppose I should say, Joe's money. But then - I married Joe because

DOLLY: I was tired of slinging hash down in that depot lunch room and he was the wealthiest cowpuncher in the Foothills -- so --, I feel it just evens things up if Gerry marries me for my money, I mean, Joe's money. That's ---

BROWN: Logic.

DOLLY: Oh Mr. Brown, you're so smart. Gerry says if the governor - that's what he calls his old man -- if the governor hadn't stopped his remittance he'd be quite happy to stay in that pigsty he calls home but - hang it all - a fellow can't starve ---- and I could see the -- logic of that. Besides, he's so handsome.

HESTER: Hardly a gentleman, I should say.

DOLLY: Perhaps not, but watch me make a man of him.

CHARLES: Oh come now, surely no Englisham would be that cold-blooded.

DOLLY: It's awful, simply awful, what this country does to the, Oxford graduate and all. You simply wouldn't believe what I've seen, Lord Satteringham.

(There is the sound of angry voices from offstage left and the noise of a brawl begins to sift through the doorway)

DOLLY: Don't mind that. It's just the cowboys. Celebrating Christmas a little early, I guess. Are you folks staying over for the holiday?

CHARLES: Well, I might say ----

HESTER: Our plans are quite indefinite.

DOLLY: You'd just be very welcome at the ranch. I'll be married by then, eh, Mr. Brown?

BROWN: God willing.

DOLLY: You old doubter!

SAM: (Running in from left - the noise is gradually increasing) Say Dolly, come on out here and break up this fight before they wreck the bar.

DOLLY: Who is it?

SAM: Billy Gray and some young maverick, They're fightin' over you.

DOLLY: Come along, Parson. Excuse us, folks, we'll be right back. (She and the Parson march off left) Oh, isn't this exciting!

HESTER: Really!

CHARLES: Now Hester.

HESTER: Truly Charles, if I may say so, the women are more uncouth than the men. It's all rather frightening.

CHARLES: Come, come, my dear. I thought she was rather an attractive little thing.

HESTER: You're quite impossible, Charles. Fancy that creature as your daughter-in-law.

CHARLES: But my dear, Gerald is not marrying the young lady.

HESTER: Perhaps not, but I dare say she is typical.

CHARLES: Oh, Gerald has too much sense to marry outside his class. After all, my dear, he is my son.

DOLLY: (Entering from the left. As she opens the door, the noise of the brawl, which has played a soft accompaniment to the above speeches is intensified) Say, Satty, old man, if you'd like to see a good free-for-all, Western style, just step this way.

BROWN: (Following her in) Come along, sir, and have a glimpse of life in the raw. The west at its best.

CHARLES: Well now - urrmph!

BROWN: It will be an education.

CHARLES: I think I would - rather! (He and Brown go out left and as Brown closes the door, the noise becomes much softer)

HESTER: (Calling after him) Careful, Charles. Beware of flying glass!

DOLLY: (Coming over to her) Now he'll be quite safe, Lady Satteringham. It's a clean fight.

HESTER: Do you mean to say those two men are still brawling?

DOLLY: Like a couple of wildcats. And all over poor little me!

HESTER: Isn't that rather low?

DOLLY: I don't getcha? It's that Billy - he's the one that followed me in - him and his everlasting jealousy. As if I'd ever want him. He actually had the crust to ask me to marry him. Did you ever hear of anything so silly?

HESTER: Why, ah - no.

DOLLY: I could imagine nothing lousier.

HESTER: Of course.

DOLLY: Say, we do understand each other, don't we? Sisters under the skin, as these poet guys put it.

HESTER: Quaint, isn't it!

DOLLY: You know, you're awfully starchy and proper, but I like you.

HESTER: And I have a little confession to make, too. Charles is not an outstanding personality.

DOLLY: No? I thought he was awfully cute.

HESTER: Oh no. Our family, while ancient, is rather obscure, really. But gentry, of course. Ha! Ha! Now you must not let Charles know I told you.

DOLLY: (Laughs uncomprehendingly) Of course not. He's rather starchy and stiff too. But I guess a good Chinook would soon thaw him out.

HESTER: Chinooks? Ah, you know them too.

DOLLY: They're what we boast about in this neck of the woods.

HESTER: I'm awfully glad you know them. Do they hunt?

DOLLY: Hey?

HESTER: Do they ride to the hounds?

DOLLY: Lady, they're ahead of them. Just wait until you feel a Chinook swoop down on you. When it's thirty below and you think you can't stand another minute of it, what do you do?

HESTER: I'm sure I shouldn't know.

DOLLY: Why you take a gander at the western horizon.

HESTER: Oh yes, they live in the mountains.

DOLLY: Who told you that? Well, if you see an arch in the sky, with the clouds black as ink above it, you know a good old Chinook is on the way.

HESTER: Do they only appear when there is this arch in the sky?

DOLLY: Of course.

HESTER: How odd!

DOLLY: In an hour - maybe two - the gentlest little Chinook is stroking your cheek and you feel all warm and tingly.

HESTER: Really!

DOLLY: Pretty soon you'll start shedding some of your clothes ---

HESTER: Dear me! How confusing. Now tell me ---

(There is a huge roar from the barroom and in a moment Charles comes dashing in from the left. The ladies rise)

CHARLES: Hester! Hester! I found him.

HESTER: (Tottering to him) Charles.

CHARLES: My dear, I've found Gerald. He's in the bar.

HESTER: (Receovering her poise) I can't believe it.

DOLLY: Do you mean to say you've found your son? Well, what did I tell you. It sure is a small world.

CHARLES: By Jove, I'm proud of my son.

HESTER: But Charles --

CHARLES: Cleanest blow I've seen for many a year. Knocked the other chappie right over the bar. By Jove!

HESTER: (Aghast) You can't mean it!

CHARLES: He saw me.

DOLLY: What's he waiting for? Guess I'll mosey along so you can start your family reunion pronto.

HESTER: Stop!

DOLLY: Do you mean me?

HESTER: This 'Gerry' you are to marry?

DOLLY: Oh my stars! I never thought --

CHARLES: What are you muttering about, Hester? Here he is.

(Gerald Fellowes comes in from the left, somewhat bruised and torn, sporting a black eye. He is dressed in a non-descript manner but the general effect is Western. Sam hovers in the background - Gerald has become his hero)

CHARLES: My dear boy, I am proud of you!

GERALD: Why, governor, fancy seeing you here! Quite a shock and all that. And -- if it isn't the mater?

HESTER: (A model of restraint) How do you do, Gerald. (She gives his cheek a maternal peck)

SAM: (From the rear) Didn't think you had it in you. Cleanest left hook I ever did see.

CHARLES: Right!

SAM: Left!

CHARLES: My good man, do you think I don't know which hand my son uses?

SAM: Well, I'll be ---. Your son? Aw, go on!

GERALD: He's quite right, Sam. Dolly, old girl, have you met the family?

DOLLY: Gerry, you're always pulling the durnedest surprises on me. Let me sit down. I can't take it all in. (She flops on the chair right)

HESTER: But Gerald, surely you can't be serious?

GERALD: In what way?

HESTER: You're not really going to marry that ---

DOLLY: (Leaping to her feet) Say ---- what's going on here!

CHARLES: Marry? What's this?

HESTER: Stupid of you, Charles. Gerald - Gerry?

CHARLES: Impossible!

DOLLY: (Trying to escape from Gerald, who has seized her) You can't do this to me.

GERALD: Now Dolly, old thing ----

DOLLY: I'm not an old thing. Listen to me, you two moth-eaten carpet bags from an English cupboard, when Dolly Blaine says she's going to marry - she's going to marry, in spite of Hell and high water.

CHARLES: Are you addressing me?

DOLLY: I'm not yelling at my prize bull.

HESTER: Now Charles! My dear young lady, surely you see how impossible it would be. After our little talk together, I'm sure you will be sensible ---

DOLLY: You kicked him out, didn't you?

(Silence)

DOLLY: Didn't you?

CHARLES: We considered a change of climate might prove beneficial.

HESTER: You did, Charles. I wasn't consulted. You were quite rude to me, as I recall it.

CHARLES: What's that? Why, dammit, woman, it's desertion.

GERALD: Let me speak ---

DOLLY: Oh, all right, mama's boy - but we'll see if you've got guts enough to stand up for yourself.

GERALD: That will do, Dolly. Sit down! (Dolly slumps into a chair) Mater! (Mother sits on the edge of the sofa) As I remember, pater, you informed me the odor of my misdeeds was fouling the ancestral nest. You asked me to go- - dramatically - never to return. Am I not right?

CHARLES: Hardly the way I would put it.

GERALD: No matter. I came to Canada. I've made my life out here. Here I intend to stay.

HESTER: No!

GERALD: I shall marry whom I please -- when I please.

DOLLY: Atta boy! Ride 'em, cowboy!

GERALD: Dolly and I will be hitched - as we Westerners put it - very shortly. You are very welcome to visit us at the ranch - for a short time, mind you. Correct, Dolly?

DOLLY: Maybe.

HESTER: (Rising) I am going to my room. (She goes to the stairs) Charles! (He does not move) Charles, have you no pride?

CHARLES: But you forget, Hester.

HESTER: What?

CHARLES: We have no pride. We can't afford that luxury.

GERALD: What's this?

DOLLY: Do you mean you're stony-broke?

CHARLES: Eh?

GERALD: Have you lost your money?

CHARLES: (After a pause) Yes.

GERALD: But how?

CHARLES: As my financial adviser, your brother proved he knew nothing about the stock market.

GERALD: So old Perce ran the family fortune on the rocks. (He chuckles) That's rather funny.

HESTER: (From the stairs) At the least, Charles, Percy is dutiful.

CHARLES: Enough! Gerald, this causes me much humiliation, but I have come to you for aid.

GERALD: That's jolly decent of you, pater, after the way you treated me. Unfortunately, I am as poor as a churchmouse.

CHARLES: Impossible!

HESTER: After all those lying letters you wrote me. Herds of gophers!

DOLLY: What's this about gophers?

CHARLES: Your thousand coolies!

DOLLY: I don't get it. Gerry, what did you tell them?

GERALD: Nothing, nothing at all, my pet.

HESTER: (Coming forward) We thought Gerald was wealthy. We thought he was a successful rancher. His huge herd of gophers - prairie dogs. To think he was only spoofing us. I knew he was!

SAM: (From the desk. Singing) Git along, little dogies --.

DOLLY: Oh Gerry, you silly, impossible sap! (To the Satteringhams) And you came all the way out here to the wilds of Canada to see a herd of gophers. You poor, deluded old darlings!

CHARLES: What's that?

DOLLY: Gerald, m'lad, I could hamstring you. Kidding your old folks like that.

HESTER: Really, Mrs. Blaine. I can't have you saying things like that to my son.

DOLLY: Now Lady S. This isn't a patch on what I'll say to him when I've got him halter-broken.

CHARLES: Ladies, please! Well, my boy, I seem to have made rather a mess of things. If you will all excuse us, Lady Satteringham and I shall retire. Trust you will forgive this intrusion. (The old couple are very much noblesse oblige as they walk to the stairs)

DOLLY: Say, what's the matter with everybody? Hey, wait a minute!

CHARLES: (At the stairs) Well?

DOLLY: Where you heading for in all the rush?

CHARLES: Out of my son's life, dear lady, before I ruin it again.

DOLLY: Ah, come off your high horse. How are you two going to get back to that castle of yours?

HESTER: It really isn't a castle, you know -----

CHARLES: We'll manage nicely, thank you.

DOLLY: (Coming up to them) I like you - in spite of what you've said about me.

CHARLES: My dear, leave us one little crumb of pride.

DOLLY: Not on your life! Pride is a Hell of thing to have in this country.

GERALD: (Coming over to Dolly) Stout fellow!

DOLLY: (To the world at large) Say, I've just figured it all out! We'll be married right now.

GERALD: Dolly, you're off your head!

DOLLY: (Excitedly) Sam, go fetch Parson Brown. You two old dears will come right out to my - I mean, our ranch and visit us for a while. Then, when you're fed up with our company, we'll pack you off home in grand style. You'll turn Queen Victoria herself green with envy. How about it? (She smiles brightly at everyone as Sam rushes off left)

SAM: She's a wonder, gol-durn it, she shore is!

GERALD: Yes -- Folks! How about it?

(The old people look at one another)

CHARLES: Wouldn't think of it! Wouldn't think of it! Have some pride left, you know.

HESTER: On the other hand ---

CHARLES: No, Hester. I quite realize it would be a jolly little outing but --

HESTER: I am glad you are so strong, Charles. We simply can't consider it.

CHARLES: See here, Hester, aren't you being a little inconsiderate? The children's feelings will be hurt.

HESTER: But Charles ---

CHARLES: (To the children) You mustn't mind Hester, my dears. Personally, I think it is extraordinarily decent of you both.

HESTER: I have made up our minds ---

CHARLES: We accept your kind invitation, with pleasure.

HESTER: Oh, Charles, you aggravate me so. I never know what you're going to do.

DOLLY: Then it is yes?

HESTER: (Warmly) Yes. (To Charles) My dear, for a moment I thought pride --

CHARLES: Nonsense, my dear Hester, the outcome was never in doubt.

(They all come downstage)

DOLLY: Oh, everything is turning out so lovely I want to cry. Kiss me Gerald, quick!

GERALD: Dolly. (They embrace each other and hold the kiss until curtain)

BROWN: (Entering from left) Did someone wish to see me?

CHARLES: Right this way, my good man. Happy Hester?

HESTER: So happy, Charles! At last we shall meet the Chinooks!

QUICK CURTAIN

To Meet The Chinooks may be produced royalty free in the Province of Alberta until June 30, 1947. The royalty on each performance outside the Province of Alberta is $3.00.